DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 820 FL 020 345

AUTHOR Wongsothorn, Achara
TITLE Analysis of Language Transfers from Thai to English in Three Types of Discourse: Explanatory, Descriptive and Persuasive.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
JOURNAL CIT PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand; spec iss p83-87 Jun 1983

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Applied Linguistics; Communication Research; *Communicative Competence (Languages); *Discourse Analysis; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Language Acquisition; Language Research; *Second Language Instruction; Syntax; *Thai; *Transfer of Training; Translation

ABSTRACT

A study on language transfer phenomenon from Thai to English is reported. The purposes of the study were to: (1) analyze the transfers from Thai to English caused by linguistic (syntax, lexis, meaning), organizational (sequence of development), style (genre, tone), and field (topic, function) factors; (2) compare the language transfers in descriptive, explanatory, and persuasive types of discourse; and (3) map patterns of transfers for application purposes. Data were collected from 15 English major students from Chulalongkorn University (Thailand) who translated Thai passages into English that illustrated the three types of discourse. It was found that the students were more successful with explanatory discourse than with descriptive or persuasive discourse. Weaknesses indicated a tendency to translate word-by-word rather than by meaning. It is concluded that criteria for successful translation are compound bilingualism and knowledge and interpretive skills of all language registers in the native language. Contains 4 references. (LB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 345 020

PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand.

Special Issue: In Memory of Ajarn M.L. Boonlua Debyasuvarn, June 1983, 83-87.

Analysis of Language Transfers from Thai to English in Three Types of Discourse: Explanatory; Descriptive and Persuasive

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Achara Wongsothorn

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Achara Wongsothorn

Chulalongkorn University Language Institute

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

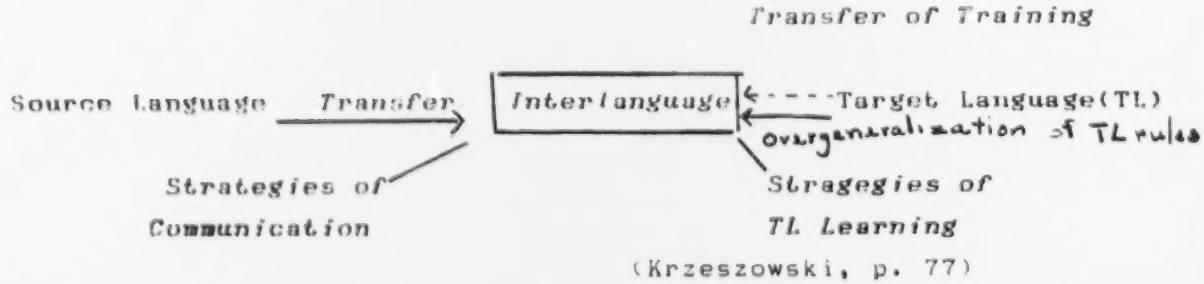
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

INTRODUCTION

I should like to point out at the outset that the present study on language transfer phenomenon from Thai to English is text-bound rather than attempting at delineating the psycholinguistic processes of transfers. In other words, Selinker's five processes vital in accounting for 'interlanguage,' a succession of stages of acquiring proficiency in a target language, the so-called 'language transfer,' 'transfer of training,' 'strategies of second language learning,' 'strategies of second language communication,' and 'overgeneralization of target language linguistic material' have been combined to explain the surface manifestation of language transfer, or Selinker's 'interlanguage.'

The proposed 'language transfer chart' has as backdrops Selinker's horizontal transfer scheme and Krzeszowski's vertical one, which may be presented in diagrams below:

Figure 1
Behavioristic Horizontal Transfer



(Krzeszowski, p. 77)

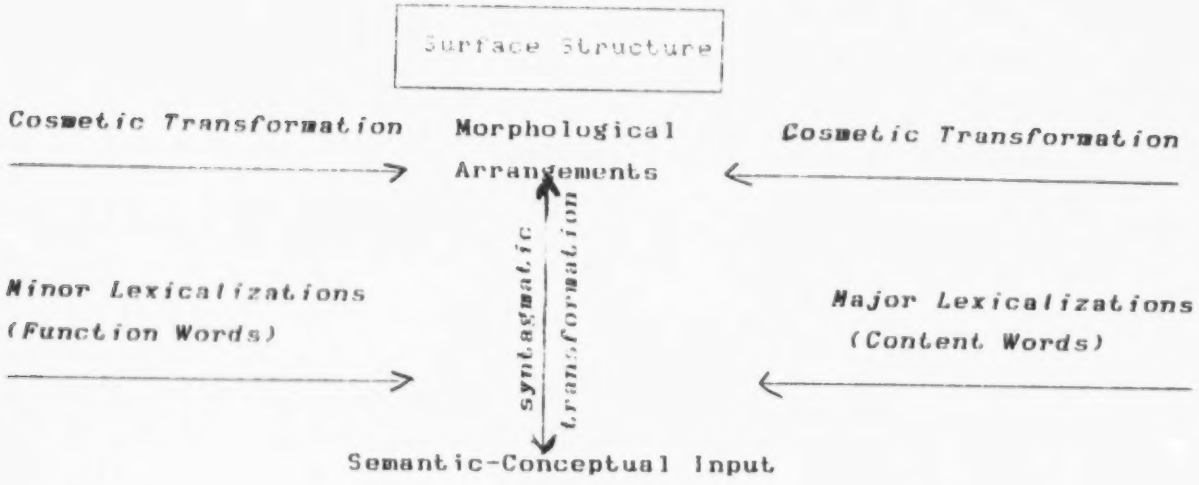
FL 020 345

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 11

Vertical Transfer

(Transformational-Generativistic)



The language transfer phenomenon in this paper includes all types of mapping out from the source language, Thai, to the target language, English. In other words, the deviants and non-deviants are accounted from the study includes Krzeszowski's 3 types of errors: type 1-universal errors regardless of the source language such as omission of articles, inflections, tense and aspect markers and function words; type 2-language specific errors such as errors concerning word order, grammatical systems and rules; and type 3-errors of the second order or Corder's 'mistake' which are performance errors such as 'mere slips.' It should be noted that the study does not attempt to explain the distinctions between Widdowson's 'expression rules' governing communicative competence and 'reference rules' governing linguistic

competence in the mapping out of language transfer elements, nor does the study attempt at explaining psychological processes of language transfer. The study, in short, is text-bound focussing on the surface features of language transfers.

THE STUDY

- Rationale

In constructing the language transfer chart for the graphic mode, linguistic, socio-linguistic, stylistic and organizational factors incorporate the patterns of transfers.

The Proposed Language Transfer Chart

LEVEL	Types			Frequency of occurrences		
SYNTAX	Basic		Complex			
LEXIS	Wrong word	Weak word	Correct word			
MEANING	FD*	PD*	ND*			
ORGANIZATION/ MECHANICS	Phrasal	Sentential	Paragraph			
STYLE/ Genre/Tone	FD	PD	ND			
FIELD Topic/Function	Full Deviation	Partial Deviation	No Deviation			

FD* - Full Deviation
PD - Partial Deviation
ND - No Deviation

- Purposes of the study

1. To analyse the transfers from Thai to English caused by four factors: linguistic (syntax, lexis, meaning), organizational (sequence of development), style (genre, tone) and field (topic, function).

2. To compare and contrast the language transfers in three types of discourse: descriptive, explanatory and persuasive.

3. To map out patterns of transfers for application purposes.

- Procedures

1. DATA COLLECTION

Fifteen English major students from Chulalongkorn University (8) and Kasetsart University (7) translated from Thai into English passages illustrating three types of discourse (Appendix I) : explanatory (Passage I-Hansawadee), descriptive (Passage II-Siam) and Persuasive (Passage III-Merle Park and Rolex). The subjects were allowed to use a dictionary if they wished to.

2. DATA ANALYSIS

Fifteen pieces of Thai⟶English translation were analysed to discover the patterns of deviant and non-deviant of successful transfers. Classifications were made in accordance with transfer levels and types presented in the chart. Transfer elements were tallied and entered as frequency of occurrences in the chart.

3. DESCRIPTION OF TRANFER LABELS WITH EXAMPLES

3.1 Syntax

Deviants resulting from the influence of Thai language were counted and classified into "basic" and "complex".

Basic syntactic deviant-: e.g. subject-verb agreement.

Example : Hongsawadee give me.....

Complex syntactic deviant-: e.g. strings of relative clauses.

Example : Mons in Hongsawadee had already lost since the time of Alongphaya which they killed.....

3.2 Lexis

Deviants are classified into three types: wrong word, weak word, and correct word.

Wrong word - the transfer is completely wrong in both Thai and English meaning of the word

Example : good at imitating foreign civilization

Thai - "ถ่ายแบบ" - English-follows, copies

Weak word - the lexical transfer still carries some meaning of Thai which does not correspond to the English one

Example : She said rather funny that

Thai - "ตลก" - English humorously

Example : Siam is the nation by the real name of the word.

"สยามเป็นประชาชาติโดย *นัยอันแท้จริงแห่งศัพท์*"

English - .....by the true meaning of the word

Correct word - In most cases the Thai words are ambiguous and can carry the meaning chosen by the subjects which turns out to be wrong in English.

Examples : .

Siam is a nation according to the true meaning of the vocabulary.

Thai - ศัพท์ English - word (not-vocabulary)

.....settled into Thai border

Thai - เข้าเขตไทย English - Thai territory

The above two cases are classified as "correct words" "ND" having "ND-no deviation" meaning since in Thai "ศัพท์" and "เขต" can also mean "vocabulary" and "border."

3.3 Meaning : Syntactic and lexical transfers have influence on the transfer of meaning from Thai to English.

FD = Full Deviation : the meaning transferred is completely wrong.

Example : Mons in Hongsawadee had already lost.

Thai = สะลายหายไปหมด

English = annihilate

PD = Partial deviation : the meaning transferred is partially correct

Example : westerners wrote "peku."

Thai = ฝรั่งเขียนเปกุ

English = use

therefore "wrote" was classified as correct word; meaning-PD

ND = No deviation : the meaning in English is wrong but the words or syntactic patterns used are ambiguous and could be correct in Thai.

Example : She acted for the first time in 1954.

Thai = แสดง

English = performed

3.4 Organization/Mechanics

Another factor affecting the transfers from Thai to English is organization/mechanics. Organization here means the structuring of words, sentences and the total paragraph. Mechanics refers to pauses, gaps and punctuation.

Phrasal

The errors occur are at the phrasal level such as word order.

Example : Because people have Thai being.

Thai = ด้วยประชาชนมีความเป็นไทย = English-with the spirit of being
= Thais, the people....

Sentential

The deviants are at the sentence level such as relative clauses.

Example : Merle Park's colleague created excellent works always.

Thai = เพื่อนร่วมงาน คู่ใจ เมอร์ล พาร์ค สร้างผลงานเยี่ยมยอดอยู่เสมอ

= English - Merle Park and her closest companion always create masterpieces.

Paragraph

Deviants occur at paragraph or discourse level. For example, in Thai the message is rendered in 2 paragraphs, whereas the English one can correctly be put in only a paragraph.

3.5 Style/Genre

The types of discourse studied here are: explanatory, descriptive and persuasive. In most cases the style-genre of the discourse was transferred correctly. In very few cases that the discourse deviates, e.g. deviation from descriptive to explanatory or from persuasive to explanatory. For example, in translating the Rolex advertisement, some subjects put more emphasis on "Merle Park" instead of her companion "Rolex"; therefore, part of the discourse is explanatory focussing on Merle Park more than on the fact that she wears a "Rolex."

3.6 Field/Function/Topic

The domain of messages may deviate completely (FD) or partially (PD). Deviation can arise from omission or distortion of the message, either syntactically or lexically. The deviation may occur at the phrasal, sentential and paragraph level. Deviation in "field" is more inclusive than deviation in "meaning." However, at times the two coincide.

4. RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

Table 1

Explanatory Discourse Total No. of Transfers = 225

Syntax	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Rank Order*
Basic Syntax	45	20.0	1
Complex Syntax	20	8.889	5
Lexis			
Wrong Word	22	9.778	4
Weak Word	6	2.667	11
Correct Word	9	4.0	10
Meaning			
FD	10	4.444	9
PD	26	11.556	3
ND	39	17.333	2
Organization/Mechanics			
Phrasal	6	2.667	11
Sentential	12	5.333	8
Paragraph	-		
Style			
FD	-		
PD	-		
ND	15	6.667	6
Field			
FD	-		
PD	-		
ND	15	6.667	6

From Table 1 we can see that transfers at the basic syntax level is most frequent in explanatory discourse. Deviations in meaning "ND" and, "PD" rank second and third respectively. Uses of "weak word" and deviation of phrasal organization are the least frequent.

Table 2

	Descriptive Discourse	Total No. of Transfers = 139	
Syntax	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Rank Order*
Basic Syntax	15	10.791	3
Complex	7	5.036	9
Lexis			
Wrong Word	9	6.475	6
Weak Word	1	.719	15
Correct Word	22	15.827	1
Meaning			
FD	15	10.791	3
PD	9	6.475	6
ND	19	13.669	2
Organization/Mechanic			
Phrasal	6	4.317	10
Sentential	6	4.317	10
Paragraph	–		
Style			
FD	2	1.439	13
PD	4	2.878	12
ND	9	6.475	0
Field			
FD	1	.719	15
PD	12	8.633	5
ND	2	1.439	13

Table 2 indicates that the most common transfer in descriptive discourse is "lexis-correct word." Transfers of meaning with no deviation from Thai (ND) and with full deviation (FD) rank second and third. Deviation in basic syntax also ranks third. The least frequent type of transfer is "lexis-weak word" and "field-full deviation."

Table 3

	Persuasive Discourse	Total No. of Transfers = 236	
Syntax	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Rank Order*
Basic Syntax	30	12.712	3
Complex Syntax	24	10.169	4
Lexis			
Wrong Word	14	5.932	7
Weak Word	10	4.237	10
Correct Word	12	5.085	8
Meaning			
FD	11	4.661	9
PD	29	12.288	2
ND	36	15.254	1
Organization/Mechanics			
Phrasal	16	6.780	6
Sentential	19	8.051	5
Paragraph	3	1.271	16
Style			
FD	2	0.847	17
PD	4	1.695	14
ND	9	3.814	11
Field			
FD	4	1.695	14
PD	6	2.542	13
ND	7	2.966	12

From Table 3 we can see that the most frequent transfer is "lixis-no deviation." Lexis "Partial deviation" is second and deviations of basic syntax rank third. The least frequent type of transfer is in "Style" with "full deviation."

5. DISCUSSIONS OF THE RESULTS

In explanatory discourse the focus is on the subject, the city called Hongsawadee. The most common deviant is basic syntax indicating that Thai students still commit "Type I" errors such as subject-verb agreement and inflections since these features do not occur in That at all.

In descriptive discourse, the language is elaborate containing difficult words. The two most frequent types of transfer is "Lexis-correct word" and "Meaning no deviation", indicating that the subjects interpreted the message erroneously and used the wrong interpretation in rendering the message in English. This fact coupled with lack of adequate English vocabulary lead to "Meaning-ND" deviants.

In persuasive discourse the deviants labelled "Meaning-ND" are again most frequent. Ranked second and third are "Meaning-PD" and "Basic syntax." This leads us to conclude that in translating Thai into English, the subjects were hampered by their Thai habits. The surface features were distorted by co-ordinate translation scheme.

Table 4

Comparative Analysis

Rank Order of Frequencies	Explanatory		Descriptive		Persuasive	
	%	Type	%	Type	%	Type
1	20	Basic syntax	16	-Lexis-Correct word	15	Meaning-ND
2	17	Meaning-ND	14	-Meaning-ND	12	Meaning-PD
3	12	Meaning-PD	11	-Basic syntax -Meaning-FD	13	Basic syntax
4	10	Lexis-Wrong Word	9	Field-PD	10	Complex syntax
5	9	Complex syntax	6	-Meaning-PD -Style-ND -Lexis-Wrong word	8	Organization-sentential
6	7	Style ND Field-ND	5	Complex syntax	7	Organization-phrasal
7	5	Orga.-Sentential	4	-Orga. Sentential -Orga. paragraph	6	Lexis-wroug word
8	4	Meaning-FD	3	Style-PD	5.1	Lexis-correct word
9	4	Lexis-Correct word	1	-Style-FD -Field-ND	4.7	Meaning-FD
10	3	Lexis-Weak word Orga.-Phrasal	7	Lexis-Weak word Field-FD	4.2	Lexis-weak word
11	-	-	-	-	3.8	Style-ND
12	-	-	-	-	3	Field-ND
13	-	-	-	-	2.5	Field-PD
14	-	-	-	-	1.7	Field-FD Style-PD
15	-	-	-	-	1.3	Orga.-paragraph
16	-	-	-	-	0.9	Style-FD

Table 4 reveals that the transfers of the following types are common and very frequent in the three types of discourse: basic syntax, meaning-no-deviation and meaning-partial deviation. The transfers of "Lexis-weak word" rank tenth in all types of discourse under analysis. For explanatory discourse "field" and "style" are correctly transferred, while deviations in both style and field occur in descriptive

and persuasive discourse. In descriptive discourse the deviation to explanatory discourse occurs because the subjects used factual and straightforward lexis and syntax of explanatory discourse in their description of "Siam". In persuasive discourse unconventional uses of lexis and syntax lead to deviants caused by distortion of meaning and misplaced emphasis on Merle Park instead of the watch she wears.

6. APPLICATIONS

It is apparent from the analysis that the subjects could tackle explanatory discourse better than the other two types of discourse. Register seems to affect their translation skills to a great extent. Their weakness in interpreting the mother-tongue, especially in the descriptive discourse containing eleborate vocabulary and complex syntactic patterns, lead them to deviants labelled "Lexis-correct word" "meaning-no deviation. It is clear that the majority of the subjects were co-ordinate belinguals. They tended to translate word by word rather than attempting at the essence of the message. Language teachers should encourage meaningfulness of transfers rather than exact word-by-word translation. Enhancing interpretive skills of deciphering the message in the mother-tongue will no doubt leads to better rendering of the message into English.

The study leads to the conclusion that the two criteria for successful translation are:

(1) compound bilingualism and

(2) knowledge and interpretive skills of all language registers in the mother-longue.

REFERENCES

1. Cooper, Charles R. and Lee Odell. *Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging*. New York: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977.
2. Krzeszowski, Tomasz P. "Contrastive Analysis in a New Dimension," in Jacek Hisiak, (ed.), *Contrastive Linguistics and the Language Teacher*. Oxford, etc.: Pergamon Press, 1981, pp. 71-86.
3. Richards, Jack C. (ed.) *Error Analysis : Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1974.
4. Sinclair, J. Mch. and R.M. Coulthard. *Towards an Analysis of Discourse: The English Used by Teachers and Pupils*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.